



Legislative Testimony to the Public Health Committee

SB No. 993 An Act Concerning Dental Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary

Public Health Committee

Friday March 15, 2013

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I am an Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA), Expanded Function Educator, and a nationally Certified Dental Assistant (CDA). I moved to Manchester, Connecticut from Jefferson City, Missouri in June 2012 to start a Dental Assistant Program at Manchester Community College that will be accredited by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of the American Dental Association. I taught dental assistants for many years in an accredited Dental Assistant Program at a Community College in St. Louis, Missouri in the early 70's. I presented a proposal for Expanded Function Dental Assistants to the Missouri Dental Board during those years and have observed the transformation of our profession in the years since that time. Most recently I served as Director of an accredited Dental Assistant Program in Jefferson City, Missouri for the past nine years where I taught expanded function courses to dental assisting students, working dental assistants, dental hygienists, and pre-dental students from across the state to certify them as Expanded Function Dental Assistants (EFDAs) in the state of Missouri.

I have been in the dental profession long enough to observe years of politics and posturing over issues that relate more to professional uncertainty than to true regard for public health. The public deserves and should expect more than this from the healthcare providers and the legislators who are charged with promoting and safe guarding their welfare.

With a background as an Expanded Function Dental Assistant, an Expanded Function Dental Assistant Educator, and a Nationally Certified Dental Assistant, all recognized credentials within the dental field; I provide you with the following key points and ***seek your support of SB No. 993:***

1. Connecticut State Dental Assistants are seeking Expanded Functions for *Certified* Dental Assistants (CDAs). These are highly trained professionals with measureable knowledge, skills, and experience in dentistry.
 - a. Nationally Certified Dental Assistants are educated in programs that meet rigorous program standards set forth by the American Dental Association (ADA).
 - i. The ADA is the largest and oldest national dental association in the world.
 - ii. The ADA today has more than 156,000 dentist members 53 constituent (state-territorial) and 545 component (local) dental societies.
 - iii. The ADA maintains a commitment to the public's oral health, ethics, science and professional advancement and access to care for all Americans.
<http://www.ada.org/>

2. Dentists in Connecticut, and across the nation, bear the responsibility for supervising the work of auxiliaries including dental assistants and dental hygienists; a legal liability that these professionals do not take lightly. They are the only diagnosticians and treatment planners in dental public health. The Connecticut State Dental Association supports SB #993. Dentists across the United States also support and have implemented Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary credentialing of dental assistants.
3. Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries have a long, measurable history of success across the country. States have effectively trained and certified, registered, or licensed these individuals for more than fifteen years to assist dentists in providing quality healthcare to the population and improve access to care.
4. Access to care is not a one-dimensional issue, but Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries have historically had a positive impact on addressing this problem.
5. Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary have been in existence long enough to have well-developed training program models, calibrations in competency testing, and benchmarks to measure quality.
6. Expanded Functions are reversible procedures that do not pose a risk the dental patient.

Professional lobbying in opposition to SB #993 is being done to the detriment of your constituents in this state. I have worked in a state that has been utilizing dental assistants in extensive expanded function roles (see excerpt from Missouri Dental Board General Rules) since 1995. I have trained Expanded Function Dental Assistants who currently help dentists to provide access to care to Medicaid patients in public health clinics. I have personally seen how effective and far-reaching the impact of an Expanded Function Dental Assistant can be in serving this population in need of dental treatment. I urge you to look past inexperienced opposition and **support SB No. 993 with no amendment.**

Should you desire more information or discussion regarding **SB No. 993**, I am happy to join with the Connecticut State Dental Assistants Association (CTDAA) to speak with you and any of your colleagues who so desire. In the short time that I have been in this state, I have learned the history of the evolution of this bill. I can tell you that CTDAA has worked with the Connecticut Dental Association, the Connecticut Department of Health, and the Dental Assisting National Board, a national testing and certifying agency for 38 states, to do *all the right things* in the development of SB #933 for your constituents. I urge you to move Connecticut forward in meeting the dental healthcare needs of this population.

Thank you for your informed consideration of SB No. 993.



Respectfully Submitted,
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